

# Phyllanthus emblica

***Phyllanthus emblica***, also known as **emblic**,<sup>[2][5]</sup> **emblic myrobalan**,<sup>[2]</sup> **myrobalan**,<sup>[5]</sup> **Indian gooseberry**,<sup>[2][5]</sup> **Malacca tree**,<sup>[5]</sup> **amlōkī** or **amla**,<sup>[5]</sup> is a **deciduous** tree of the family **Phyllanthaceae**. Its native range is tropical and southern Asia.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Description

The tree is small to medium in size, reaching 1–8 metres (3½–26 feet) in height. The bark is mottled. The branchlets are finely pubescent (not **glabrous**), 10–20 centimetres (4–8 inches) long, usually deciduous. The leaves are simple, subsessile and closely set along branchlets, light green, resembling **pinnate** leaves. The flowers are greenish–yellow. The fruit is nearly spherical, light greenish–yellow, quite smooth and hard on appearance, with six vertical stripes or furrows. The fruit is up to 26 millimetres (1 in) in diameter, and, while the fruit of wild plants weigh approximately 5.5 grams (0.2 ounces), cultivated fruits average 28.4 g (1 oz) to 56 g (2 oz).<sup>[6]</sup>



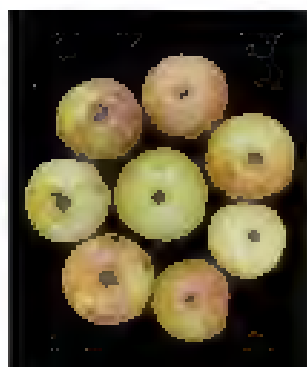
Trunk and main branches



Leaves



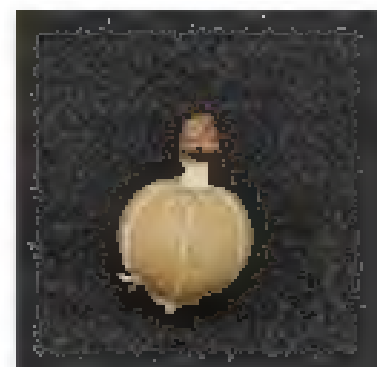
Budding and flowers



Fruits



Fruit size comparison



Seed close-up

Chemical constituents

The fruits contain high amounts of ascorbic acid (vitamin C),<sup>[7]</sup> and have a bitter taste that may derive from a high density of ellagitannins,<sup>[8]</sup> such as emblicanin A (37%), emblicanin B (33%), punigluconin (12%), and pedunculagin (14%).<sup>[9]</sup> Amla also contains punicalagin and phyllanemblinin A, phyllanemblin other polyphenols, such as flavonoids, kaempferol, ellagic acid, and gallic acid.<sup>[8][10]</sup>

Uses

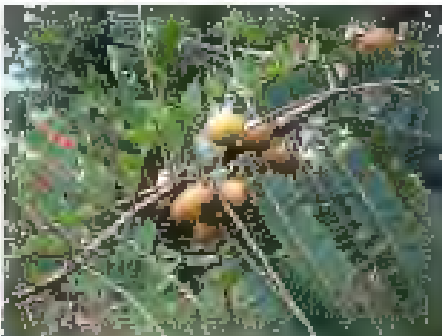
Ripening in autumn, the berries are harvested by hand after climbing to upper branches bearing the fruits. The taste of Indian emblic is sour, bitter and astringent, and it is quite fibrous.

Culinary

The amla fruit may be eaten raw or cooked, and in South Asia, the fruit is often pickled with salt, oil, and spices. It is used as an ingredient in dishes including *dal* (a lentil preparation), and is also made into *amle ka murabbah*, a sweet dish made by soaking the berries in sugar syrup until they are candied. It is traditionally consumed after meals.

In the Batak area of Sumatra, Indonesia, the inner bark is used to impart an astringent, bitter taste to the broth of a traditional fish soup known as *holat*.<sup>[11]</sup>

Phyllanthus emblica



Plant



Fruit, whole and halved

Conservation status



Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Plantae
Clade:	Tracheophytes
Clade:	Angiosperms
Clade:	Eudicots
Clade:	Rosids
Order:	Malpighiales
Family:	Phyllanthaceae
Genus:	<i>Phyllanthus</i>
Species:	<i>P. emblica</i>

Binomial name
<b><i>Phyllanthus emblica</i></b> <span></span> <sup>[2]</sup>
Synonyms <sup>[3][4]</sup>
<i>Cicca emblica</i> (L.) Kurz <i>Diasperus emblica</i> (L.) Kuntze <i>Dichelactina nodicaulis</i> Hance <i>Emblica arborea</i> Raf. <i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn. <i>Phyllanthus glomeratus</i> Roxb. ex Wall. nom. inval. <i>Phyllanthus mairei</i> H.Lév. <i>Phyllanthus mimosifolius</i> Salisb. <i>Phyllanthus taxifolius</i> D.Don



Indian gooseberry pickle



Amla juice



Amla pickle

## Traditional medicine

In *Ayurveda*, dried and fresh fruits of the plant are used as a common constituent.<sup>[8][12]</sup>

## In culture

In the Buddhist tradition there are many references to the fruit of the emblic myrobalan. In the *Satapaṇcāsatka*, Buddha's knowledge is described in a poetic simile: "O Bhagavan, the entire origination of all types of phenomena throughout time is within the range of your mind, like an ambalan fruit in the palm of your hand".<sup>[13]</sup>

Half an amla fruit was the final gift to the Buddhist *sangha* by the great Indian emperor *Ashoka*. This is illustrated in the *Ashokavadana* in the following verses: "A great donor, the lord of men, the eminent Maurya Ashoka, has gone from being lord of Jambudvīpa [the continent] to being

lord of half a myrobalan".<sup>[14]</sup> In Theravada Buddhism, this plant is said to have been used as the tree for achieving enlightenment, or Bodhi, by the twenty-first Buddha, named Phussa Buddha.<sup>[15]</sup>

In Hinduism, the myrobalan, called the *amalaka* in Sanskrit, is sacred to all three members of the Trimurti, the Hindu supreme trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. According to legend, during a religious gathering, Lakshmi, Vishnu's consort, expressed a desire to worship Shiva, while Parvati, Shiva's consort, wished to worship Vishnu. Moved by each other's piety, they shed tears upon the earth, from which emerged the first myrobalan trees.<sup>[16]</sup> The Amalaka Ekadashi is a Hindu occasion dedicated to Vishnu, venerating the myrobalan.



Amalaka at the top of the Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar



Hand of a standing Buddha statue holding a myrobalan



Amala in Bhopal Madhya Pradesh

## See also

- Emblicanin
- Triphala, an Ayurvedic mixture containing amla.

## References

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